



STATE OF MICHIGAN

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Sen. Allen and Rep. Elsenheimer sponsor legislation to aid agricultural businesses

LANSING – Legislation allowing agricultural businesses to advertise along state highways was introduced today in the Michigan State Senate and House of Representatives, announced Sen. Jason Allen and Rep. Kevin Elsenheimer.

Senate Bill 445 and House Bill 4699 will amend the Highway Advertising Act of 1972, which prohibits advertising in areas zoned agricultural. The bills would allow only agricultural businesses to advertise in agricultural areas.

“Agriculture is Michigan’s second largest industry,” said Allen, R-Traverse City. “This legislation will aid small agricultural businesses all across the state by allowing them to advertise and attract more customers. Michigan has a rich farm heritage and this is another way we can help preserve farmland by keeping farms in production.”

Constituents represented by Allen and Elsenheimer contacted their legislators about sponsoring this legislation because they are unable to obtain a permit from the Michigan Department of Transportation to advertise in areas zoned agricultural.

“Current law doesn't allow agricultural property owners to advertise the goods they produce, or other agri-tourism activities they might offer, even if the sign is on their own land,” said Elsenheimer, R-Bellaire. “This is counterproductive to all the efforts being made at local, state and federal levels to help and encourage farmers trying to make ends meet. We must make this change to help strengthen the important farming tradition in Michigan and allow families to pass the heritage on to future generations.”

If signed into law, the bills will help promote agri-tourism throughout northern Michigan, helping tourists find “out of the way” local farms.

“Small farms depend on seasonal tourism and SB 445 is important to farming all across Michigan,” Allen said. “Farmers have a history of innovation. A single farmer may give orchard tours in the spring, sell cherries or vegetables in the summer and offer hayrides in the fall. This legislation will help those farms that are off the ‘beaten path’ promote the products and services that are vital to their financial survival.”

SB 445 was referred to the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Tourism, while HB 4699 will be read in and referred to Committee on May 3.

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Editors Note: An audio announcement from Sen. Allen is available on the Senate Majority Audiowire at:
<http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/audiowire/allen/index.htm>